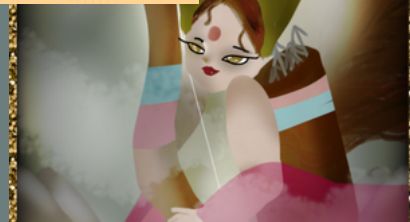


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VAISHNO

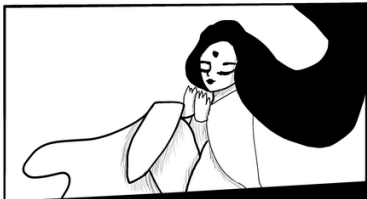
THE GODDESS OF THE HILLS
AND A MANIFESTATION OF MOTHER DEVI



**ACCORDING TO LEGEND, MATA VAISHNO
DEVI WAS BORN IN THE SOUTHERN PART
OF INDIA, TO RATNAKAR SAGAR. HER
PARENTS HAD BEEN CHILDLESS FOR
SEVERAL YEARS AND YEARNED TO SIRE A
CHILD. JUST THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BIRTH
OF THE DIVINE CHILD, RATNAKAR HAD
PROMISED THAT HE WOULD NEVER EVER
INTERFERE WITH WHATEVER HIS CHILD
CHOSE TO DO LATER IN LIFE. MATA
VAISHNO DEVI WAS BORN THE NEXT DAY
AND WAS NAMED TRIKUTA. SHE WAS
LATER CALLED VAISHNAVI BECAUSE SHE
HAD TAKEN BIRTH FROM THE LINEAGE OF
LORD VISHNU.**



WHEN SHE WAS 9 YEARS OLD, TRIKUTA SOUGHT HER FATHER'S PERMISSION FOR PERFORMING PENANCE ON THE SEASHORE. TRIKUTA SAT THERE, PRAYING TO LORD RAMA, AN AVATAR OF LORD VISHNU. AT THAT VERY TIME, LORD RAMA PASSED ALONG THE SEASHORE, IN SEARCH OF GODDESS SITA, WHO HAD BEEN ABDUCTED BY THE DEMON KING, RAVANA. RAMA WAS PRESENT WITH HIS ENTIRE VANARA SENA (ARMY OF MONKEYS).



SEEING THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL WITH THE DIVINE GLOW, DEEP IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION, HE APPROACHED HER AND BLESSED HER. TRIKUTA TOLD RAMA THAT SHE HAD ALREADY ACCEPTED HIM AS HER HUSBAND. RAMA, BEING EKA PATNI VRATA (VOWED TO HAVE ONLY ONE SPOUSE), HAD DECIDED THAT HE WOULD WED AND BE FAITHFUL ONLY TO SITA. HOWEVER, MOVED BY THE GIRL'S DEVOTION TOWARDS HIM, THE LORD GAVE HER THE NAME VAISHNAVI AND PROMISED HER THAT DURING KALIYUGA, HE WOULD TAKE AN AVATAR OF KALKI AND WOULD THEN MARRY HER.



RAMA, IN THE MEANTIME, ALSO INSTRUCTED TRIKUTA TO MEDITATE IN A PARTICULAR CAVE FOUND IN THE TRIKUTA RANGE OF MANIK MOUNTAINS, SITUATED IN NORTHERN INDIA. HE PROCEEDED TO GIVE HER A BOW AND ARROWS, A SMALL ARMY OF MONKEYS AND ALSO A LION FOR HER PROTECTION. THE DIVINE MOTHER THEN DECIDED TO OBSERVE THE 'NAVRATRA', TO PRAY FOR THE VICTORY OF LORD RAMA AGAINST RAVANA.



**EVEN TODAY, DEVOTEES READ THE
RAMAYANA DURING THE 9 DAYS
OF THE NAVRATRI FESTIVAL. RAMA
ALSO PROMISED HER THAT THE
ENTIRE WORLD WOULD SING HER
PRAISES AND REVERE HER AS
MATA VAISHNO DEVI. IT IS DUE TO
RAMA'S BLESSINGS THAT MATA
VAISHNO DEVI ATTAINED
IMMORTALITY AND NOW
ATTRACTS SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF
THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS TO THE
SHRINE EACH YEAR.**

LEGENDS OF MATA VAISHNO DEVI



ACCORDING TO LEGEND, AT THE TIME WHEN THE MOTHER GODDESS WAS ENGAGED IN WAGING TERRIBLE WARS AGAINST AND DESTROYING THE ASURAS OR DEMONS CAUSING CHAOS IN THE WORLD, HER THREE MAIN MANIFESTATIONS, NAMELY, MAHA KALI, MAHA LAKSHMI AND MAHA SARASWATI UNITED INTO ONE SINGLE POWER, POOLING IN THEIR COLLECTIVE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH. THIS UNIFICATION CREATED A BRIGHT TEJAS OR AURA AND A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL EMERGED FROM THIS TEJAS. THE GIRL ASKED THE MOTHER GODDESSES FOR INSTRUCTIONS TO PROCEED AHEAD WITH HER MISSION. THE DEVIS TOLD HER THAT HER MISSION WAS TO MANIFEST ON EARTH AND SPEND HER TIME THERE, UPHOLDING DHARMA OR RIGHTEOUSNESS.



THEY ASKED THE DIVINE GIRL TO TAKE HUMAN BIRTH IN THE HOME OF RATNAKAR AND THEN GO ON TO LEAD A LIFE OF PIOUSNESS AND PENANCE, SO AS TO RAISE HER OWN CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE LEVEL OF GODHEAD. THEY ALSO TOLD HER THAT ONCE SHE HAD ATTAINED THAT LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, SHE WOULD THEN AUTOMATICALLY MERGE INTO AND BECOME ONE WITH LORD VISHNU.



ACCORDINGLY, THE GIRL TOOK BIRTH AS A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GIRL CHILD. SHE HAD AN INSATIABLE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND DISPLAYED KEEN LEANINGS TOWARDS SPIRITUALITY AND A QUEST FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INNER SELF. SHE WOULD GO INTO DEEP MEDITATION AND STAY IN THAT STATE FOR HOURS TOGETHER. SHE THEN DECIDED TO RENOUNCE ALL WORLDLY COMFORTS AND TRAVEL DEEP INTO THE FOREST TO PERFORM SEVERE AUSTERITIES AND PENANCE. THIS IS WHEN SHE MET LORD RAMA AND ATTAINED HIS BLESSINGS.

SHE WANTED TO BECOME ONE WITH RAMA, AS WAS HER MISSION. HOWEVER, RAMA, KNOWING THAT THIS WAS NOT THE APPROPRIATE TIME, PROMISED HER THAT HE WOULD VISIT HER AGAIN, AFTER THE END OF HIS EXILE. HE TOLD HER THAT IF SHE RECOGNIZED HIM AT THAT TIME, HE WOULD THEN FULFILL HER WISH.

RAMA KEPT HIS WORD AND VISITED HER AFTER WINNING THE BATTLE AGAINST RAVANA. HE CAME TO HER IN THE GUISE OF AN OLD MAN, WHO VAISHNAVI COULD NOT RECOGNIZE. SHE WAS COMPLETELY DISTRAUGHT WHEN RAMA REVEALED HIS TRUE SELF. RAMA LAUGHED AND TOLD HER THAT THE TIME HAD YET NOT COME FOR THEM TO BE WITH ONE ANOTHER. HE ALSO ASSURED HER THAT THEY WOULD UNITE DURING KALIYUG, ASKING HER TO SET UP HER ASHRAM IN THE FOOT OF THE TRIKUTA HILLS AND SERVE TO UPLIFT THE POOR AND THE DESTITUTE.

**VAISHNAVI'S ASHRAM
THRIVES AND
FLOURISHES**



WITH RAMA'S BLESSINGS, PEOPLE CAME TO KNOW OF VAISHNAVI'S GLORY AND THE WORD OF HER ASHRAM SPREAD FAR WIDE. VERY SOON, DEVOTEES AND FOLLOWERS BEGAN TO FLOCK TO HER ASHRAM IN ORDER TO GET A DARSHAN FROM HER. A DEVOTEE OF VAISHNO DEVI, SRIDHAR, ORGANIZED A BHANDARA (COMMUNITY MEAL) IN WHICH THE WHOLE VILLAGE AND MAHAYOGI GURU GORAKSHNATHJI ALONG WITH ALL HIS FOLLOWERS WERE INVITED AS PER VAISHNO DEVI'S WISHES. GURU GORAKSHNATH VISITED THIS BHANDARA ALONG WITH MORE 300 DISCIPLES INCLUDING THE BHAIRAVNATH. BHAIRAVNATH WAS AMAZED BY SEEING THE POWER OF DIVINE MOTHER. HE WANTED TO TEST HER POWERS. FOR THIS, HE ASKED GURU GORAKSHNATHJI FOR HIS PERMISSION. GURU GORAKSHNATH TOLD BHAIRAVNATH THAT HE DID NOT RECOMMEND THIS BUT IF HE STILL WANTED TO TEST VAISHNO DEVI'S POWERS, HE COULD GO AHEAD AND DO SO.



BHAIRAVNATH THEN ATTEMPTED TO GRAB VAISHNO DEVI BUT SHE FOUGHT HIM BACK AND THEN DECIDED TO FLEE THE PLACE. SHE RAN AWAY INTO THE MOUNTAINS IN ORDER TO RESUME HER PENANCE. HOWEVER, BHAIRON NATH CONTINUED TO CHASE HER THERE AS WELL. ON THE WAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, VAISHNAVI TOOK SEVERAL HALTS AT BANGANGA, CHARAN PADUKA AND ADHKWARI. SHE ULTIMATELY REACHED THE CAVE WHERE SHE INTENDED TO CONTINUE HER TAPASYA. TO HER CHAGRIN, BHAIRON NATH FOLLOWED HER THERE AS WELL. FINALLY, LOSING ALL PATIENCE, SHE DECIDED TO KILL HIM TO END HIS HARASSMENT.FOLLOWERS OF MATA VAISHNO DEVI BELIEVE THAT NO ONE CAN VISIT HER TEMPLE UNLESS AND UNTIL SHE ISSUES A "BULAWA" TO THEM, THAT IS, TILL SHE CALLS THEM TO VISIT HER SHRINE. IRRESPECTIVE OF CASTE, CREED AND SOCIAL STATUS, IT IS SAID THAT A JOURNEY TO THE SACRED SHRINE OF VAISHNO DEVI CAN MATERIALIZE IF AND ONLY IF SHE WILLS IT AND BLESSES THE DEVOTEE WITH HER DARSHAN. IN FACT, MANY DEVOTEES HAVE BEEN SAID TO EXPERIENCE THIS FIRST HAND. THE CONVERSE IS ALSO SAID TO BE TRUE. IF THERE IS A CALL FROM THE DEITY, EVEN THOSE WHO HAD NOT PLANNED FOR THE TRIP ARE BOUND TO GO VISIT THE MOTHER AT HER SHRINE.



**THOSE DESIROUS OF VISITING HER
SHRINE, THEREFORE, MAKE A
FERVENT WISH IN THEIR HEARTS
AND PRAY TO HER FOR
SHOWERING HER GRACE AND
GRANTING DARSHAN TO THEM.
THEN, THEY SURRENDER TO HER
WILL AND LEAVE IT TO HER TO
DECIDE WHEN IT WOULD BE THE
RIGHT TIME FOR THEM TO GO VISIT
HER HOLY ABODE.**



VAISHNO DEVI OF HILLS

**IS A GODDESS MADE BY THE
TRIDEVI. AND HAS AN
ABILITY TO TURN INTO KALI.
SHE WAITED UNTIL LORD
KALIKI WAS BORN AND SHE
COULD MARRY HIM. SO SHE
WAITED IN ENTERAL
MEDIATION WAITING FOR 6
SOLOR YEARS.**